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MAY 05 2009

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
Charles S. Roberson :
Application No. 09/533,421 : DECISION PETITION
Filed: March 22, 2000 : PURSUANT TO 37 C.F.R.
Attorney Docket Number: : § 1.137(B)
0370.0724C :
Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR :
CONTROLLING THE OPERATION OF A :
FLEXIBLE CROSS-CONNECT SYSTEM :

This is a decision on petition filed March 6, 2009, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b), to revive the above-identified application.

The petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) is **DISMISSED**.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply within the meaning of 37 C.F.R. § 1.113 in a timely manner to the final Office action mailed June 2, 2006, which set a shortened statutory period for reply of three months. No extensions of time under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) were obtained, and no response was received. Accordingly, the above-identified application became abandoned on September 3, 2006. A notice of abandonment was mailed on January 10, 2007.

A grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) must be accompanied by:

- (1) The reply required to the outstanding Office action or notice, unless previously filed;

- (2) The petition fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(m);
- (3) A statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional, and;
- (4) Any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.20(d)) required pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section.

With this petition, Applicant has submitted the petition fee and the proper statement of unintentional delay. Applicant has further indicated that continuation application was filed concurrently with this petition.

Office records confirm that continuation application 12/399,742 was filed on March 6, 2009.

The first two requirements of Rule 1.137(b) have been met. The fourth requirement of Rule 1.137(b) is not applicable, as a terminal disclaimer is not required.¹

Regarding the third requirement, Applicant has not established that the entire period of delay was unintentional. It is noted that the present petition was not filed until more than two years and one month had passed since the mailing of the notice of abandonment. It is not clear why the Applicant chose to take no course of action for such a long period of time. It does not appear that any action was taken to further the prosecution of this application, subsequent to the mailing of the notice of abandonment on January 10, 2007, for more than two years and one month.

It is equally unclear what, after all of this time, prompted the Applicant to advance the prosecution of this application.

As such, it appears that the Applicant intentionally allowed this application to go abandoned. The extended inaction of the Applicant appears to be intentional.

A discussion follows.

¹ See Rule 1.137(d).

In order for a petition under 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) to be granted, the holder of the rights to the application must have unintentionally allowed the application to go abandoned, and a delay resulting from a deliberately chosen course of action on the part of the applicant is not an "unintentional" delay within the meaning of 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b).

The periods of delay:

There are three periods to be considered during the evaluation of a petition under 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b):

- (1) the delay in reply that originally resulted in the abandonment;
- (2) the delay in filing an initial petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) to revive the application; and
- (3) the delay in filing a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) to revive the application.

Currently, the delay has not been shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be unintentional for periods (1) or (2).

As to Period (1), the patent statute at 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Director to revive an "unintentionally abandoned application." The legislative history of Public Law 97-247 reveals that the purpose of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) is to permit the Office to have more discretion than in 35 U.S.C. §§ 133 or 151 to revive abandoned applications in appropriate circumstances, but places a limit on this discretion, stating that "[u]nder this section a petition accompanied by either a fee of \$500 or a fee of \$50 **would not be granted where the abandonment or the failure to pay the fee for issuing the patent was intentional** as opposed to being unintentional or unavoidable." [emphasis added]. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 6-7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 770-71. The revival of an intentionally abandoned application is antithetical to the meaning and intent of the statute and regulation.

35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Commissioner to accept a petition "for the revival of an unintentionally abandoned application for a patent." As amended December 1, 1997, 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b)(3) provides that a petition under 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) must be accompanied by a statement that the delay was unintentional, but provides that "[t]he Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional." Where, as here there is a question

whether the initial delay was unintentional, the Applicant must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b). See In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989); 37 CFR 1.137(b). Here, in view of the inordinate delay of more than two years and one month in resuming prosecution, there is a question whether the entire delay was unintentional. Applicant should note that the issue is not whether some of the delay was unintentional by any party; rather, the issue is whether the entire delay has been shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be unintentional.

The question under 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) for period (1) is whether the delay on the part of the party having the right or authority to reply to avoid abandonment (or not reply) was unintentional. Accordingly, any renewed petition must clearly identify the party having the right to reply to avoid abandonment. That party, in turn must explain what effort(s) was made to reply to the outstanding Office action and further, why no reply was filed. If no effort was made to reply, then that party must explain why the delay in this application does not result from a deliberate course of action (or inaction). Applicant should explain why this application became abandoned subsequent to the mailing of the final Office action mailed June 2, 2006. Statements from both the Applicant and the former counsel of record must be provided.² It must be explained why no response was submitted to this notice for such an extended period of time.

As the courts have made clear, it is pointless for the USPTO to revive a long abandoned application without an adequate showing that the delay did not result from a deliberate course of action. See Lawman Armor v. Simon, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10843, 74 USPQ2d 1633 (DC EMich 2005); Field Hybrids, LLC v. Toyota Motor Corp., 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1159 (D. Minn Jan. 27, 2005); Lumenyte Int'l Corp. v. Cable Lite Corp., Nos. 96-1011, 96-1077, 1996 U.S. App. LEXIS 16400, 1996 WL 383927 (Fed. Cir. July 9, 1996) (unpublished) (patents held unenforceable due to a finding of inequitable conduct in submitting an inappropriate statement that the abandonment was unintentional).

As to Period (2), where the applicant deliberately chose not to seek or persist in seeking the revival of an abandoned application, or where the applicant deliberately chooses to

² It is noted that a "Revocation and New Power by Assignee and Statement under 37 C.F.R. § 3.73(b)" was filed on February 26, 2009.

delay seeking the revival of an abandoned application, the resulting delay in seeking revival of the abandoned application cannot be considered as "unintentional" within the meaning of 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b)³.

The language of both 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) are clear and unambiguous, and furthermore, without qualification. That is, the delay in filing the reply during prosecution, as well as in filing the petition seeking revival, must have been, without qualification, "unintentional" for the reply to now be accepted on petition. The Office requires that the entire delay be at least unintentional as a prerequisite to revival of an abandoned application to prevent abuse and injury to the public. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 771 ("[i]n order to prevent abuse and injury to the public the Commissioner . . . could require applicants to act promptly after becoming aware of the abandonment"). The December 1997 change to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137 did not create any new right to overcome an intentional delay in seeking revival, or in renewing an attempt at seeking revival, of an abandoned application. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53160 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 87 (October 21, 1997), which clearly stated clear that any protracted delay (here, two years and one month) could trigger, as here, a request for additional information. As the courts have since made clear, a protracted delay in seeking revival, as here, requires a petitioner's detailed explanation seeking to excuse the delay as opposed to USPTO acceptance of a general allegation of unintentional delay. See Lawman Armor v. Simon, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10843, 74 USPQ2d 1633, at 1637-8 (DC EMich 2005); Field Hybrids, LLC v. Toyota Motor Corp., 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1159 (D. Minn Jan. 27, 2005) at *21-*23. Statements are required from both the Applicant and former counsel, explaining why this petition was not filed sooner.

Punctuality and Due Diligence:

For more than a century, punctuality and due diligence, equally with good faith, have been deemed essential requisites to the success of those who seek to obtain the special privileges of the patent law, and they are demanded in the interest of the public and for the protection of rival

³ See MPEP § 711.03(c).

inventors. See: Porter v. Loudon, 7 App.D.C. 64 (C.A.D.C. 1895), citing Wollensak v. Sargent, 151 U.S. 221, 228, 38 L. Ed. 137, 14 S. Ct. 291 (1894).

Similarly, an invention benefits no one unless it is made public, and the rule of diligence should be so applied as to encourage reasonable promptness in conferring this benefit upon the public. Automatic Electric Co. v. Dyson, 52 App. D.C. 82; 281 F. 586 (C.A.D.C. 1922). Generally, 35 U.S.C. §6; 37 C.F.R. §§1.181, 182, 183.

The lengthy period of inaction does not appear to be consistent with the requirements of punctuality, due diligence, good faith, and the encouragement of reasonable promptness.

On renewed petition, Applicant will need to address each of these issues, and include statements from both the Applicant and former counsel, if it is to be established that the entire period of delay was unintentional.

Applicant is reminded that any statement of facts should be made by one having firsthand knowledge of the facts set forth therein.

Any reply must be submitted within **TWO MONTHS** from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) are permitted. The reply should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b)". This is not a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C § 704.

Thereafter, there will be no further reconsideration of this matter^{4, 5}.

4 For more than a century, punctuality and due diligence, equally with good faith, have been deemed essential requisites to the success of those who seek to obtain the special privileges of the patent law, and they are demanded in the interest of the public and for the protection of rival inventors. See: Porter v. Loudon, 7 App.D.C. 64 (C.A.D.C. 1895), citing Wollensak v. Sargent, 151 U.S. 221, 228, 38 L. Ed. 137, 14 S. Ct. 291 (1894). An invention benefits no one unless it is made public, and the rule of diligence should be so applied as to encourage reasonable promptness in conferring this benefit upon the public. Automatic Electric Co. v. Dyson, 52 App. D.C. 82; 281 F. 586 (C.A.D.C. 1922). Generally, 35 U.S.C. §6; 37 C.F.R. §§1.181, 182, 183.

5 If, on the second request for reconsideration, Applicant fails to satisfy the showings burden required: (a) the resulting decision may be one viewed as final agency action; and (b) provisions for reconsideration, such as those at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(e), will not apply to that decision.

The renewed petition should indicate in a prominent manner that the attorney handling this matter is Paul Shanoski, and may be submitted by mail⁶, hand-delivery⁷, or facsimile⁸. Registered users of EFS-Web may alternatively submit a response to this decision via EFS-Web⁹.

If responding by mail, Applicant is advised not to place the undersigned's name on the envelope. Only the information that appears in the footnote should be included - adding anything else to the address will delay the delivery of the response to the undersigned.

Telephone inquiries regarding *this decision* should be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3225¹⁰. All other inquiries concerning examination procedures should be directed to the Technology Center.

/Paul Shanoski/
Paul Shanoski
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

6 Mail Stop Petition, Commissioner for Patents, United States Patent and Trademark Office, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA, 22313-1450.

7 Customer Window, Randolph Building, 401 Dulany Street, Alexandria, VA, 22314.

8 (571) 273-8300- please note this is a central facsimile number.

9 <https://sportal.uspto.gov/authenticate/authenticateuserlocalepf.html>

10 Applicant will note that all practice before the Office should be in writing, and the action of the Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. See 37 C.F.R. § 1.2. As such, Applicant is reminded that no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Applicant's further action(s).